

Headteacher: **Monica Forty**

Ben Jonson Primary School
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23 March 2020

School Closure

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you know, the school will be closed to most pupils from Monday 23rd March until further notice. This is difficult for all of us – children, staff and families – to process and come to terms with but we will be back together at school again and we are doing all we can to reassure children and to make sure that they have learning to do at home.

Schools have been closed across the country for the purposes of social distancing – to slow down the spread of the COVID-19 virus – but school staff have been called upon to provide childcare for a small group of children so that their parents can perform essential work. We have been speaking to some of those parents already but have now received updated government guidance regarding the intended provision for children of key workers and for children who might be particularly vulnerable.

There are 5 key principles underpinning the eligibility:

1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be: the smaller the group being cared for, the safer for them, and for families and the whole community, as spread of the virus will be slowed. If there is a parent at home, who is not a key worker, it is recommended that this parent takes care of the children.
2. If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then provision will be available for them.
3. Parents should not rely, for childcare, upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends or family members with underlying conditions.
4. Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.
5. Residential special schools, boarding schools and special settings continue to care for children wherever possible.

We have been working to plan the provision that will be available at Ben Jonson. School staff will work, on a rota, to look after the children during the school day. During this time, if appropriate, the children will be supported to do the remote learning set by the teachers. For the younger children, continuous provision will be set up in the Early Years. The remote learning will be interspersed with physical activity and other provision, including reading, art and music activities. The children will be provided with a lunch.



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Please let us know as soon as possible if you think you qualify for a keyworker family place by emailing admin@benjonson.towerhamlets.sch.uk or by phoning the school office on 020 7790 4110. We must know exactly who is going to attend each day so that we can plan for the correct levels of staffing. With these procedures in place, we will endeavour to provide a service throughout the next two weeks and after the Easter holidays. We understand that there will be provision for keyworker families over the Easter holidays. Please go to www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/hcs for an application form for the Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare scheme.

Please understand that these are exceptional circumstances and we are doing our absolute best to make the provision that is needed. Our ability to open on any given day will, however, need to be assessed for safety (for example staff/pupil ratio; availability of first aiders; availability of cleaners and premises staff) and we may need to close at short notice if we cannot provide a safe setting. We will communicate with affected parents as early as possible if this is the case.

Thank you for the kind words and support offered from so many of you to the school at this time. We really value that you work in such close partnership with us. I am very proud of the staff team here: their response to the need for their services has been amazing. All have their own family commitments and worries but we have worked together to ensure that we can support the essential services needed by our whole community at this time. I am also really proud of our wonderful children who we will miss in the coming weeks. We look forward to seeing them back at school soon as we are given the direction to re-open.

Monica Forty
Headteacher

